

Character Class

Back to Basics -- Facing a Blank Character Sheet

by Skip Williams



When you're new to the *D&D* game, the sheer variety of character sheets available, both in print and online, can bring on a headache. Even after you've chosen a character sheet, you face the task of filling it out. The task isn't terribly difficult, but it's hardly intuitive. That's because character sheets are laid out so you can find what you need quickly during play, not so you can create your character quickly. (After all, you'll spend far more time playing your character than you'll spend creating it.) This article takes the character sheet provided here on this site and unravels its mysteries by creating and recording an example character.

In the [first installment](#), we covered generating ability scores, choosing your class and race, assigning and adjusting ability scores, and recording racial traits. In part 2 (this article), we're covering skill selections, class features, feats, and equipment. In the final installment, we'll deal with recording all of your character's combat data and wrapping up loose details.

To create a character according to the directions provided here, download and print out all four pages of the [standard character sheet](#), or you can download the sheet created for [this article's sample character](#) and follow along with the example.

Step 5: Choose Skills

Look to your class description to determine your skill points and class skills.

Example: Page 34 in the *Player's Handbook* shows that druids have the following class skills: Concentration, Craft, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Heal, Knowledge (nature), Listen, Profession, Ride, Spellcraft, Spot, Survival, and Swim. I mark these skills as class skills on the fourth page.

As a 1st-level druid with an Intelligence score of 12, Roywyn has 20 skill points (4 + 1 for her Intelligence modifier = 5, $5 \times 4 = 20$). Rather than spend those points on my own, however, I turn to the druid starting package on page 37 and choose five skills from that list (4 + Intelligence modifier). I choose Concentration, Handle Animal, Heal, Spellcraft, and Survival. Roywyn has 4 ranks in each of these skills. I enter the skill ranks and Roywyn's ability modifier for each skill. It's possible that several things, such as equipment, could improve or degrade Roywyn's skill scores, but I'll go ahead and record her scores now. I can change them later if necessary.

Roywyn has a racial bonus on Craft (alchemy) checks, but only trained characters can use that skill, so I do not record a skill bonus for that skill.

Tip: If you'd like to choose your skills *ala carte* rather than choosing them from your class starting package, turn to the text on acquiring skill ranks on page 62 in the *Player's Handbook*.

Step 6: Record Class Features

A druid has many class features, which are listed on pages 34-37 in the *Player's Handbook*. It's usually easiest to work through a character's class features in the same order they're presented in the book.

Example: As a 1st-level druid, Roywyn has the following class features:

- Spells

Roywyn can cast three 0-level and one 1st-level spell each day. Wisdom governs her spellcasting, giving her a +2 modifier on save DCs against her spells (the save DC for any spell is 10 + spell level + the caster's relevant ability modifier). Her Wisdom score of 15 also gives her one bonus 1st-level spell each day (see page 8 in the *Player's Handbook*); a relevant ability score of 15 also grants a bonus 2nd-level spell, but Roywyn can't cast any of those yet, so she cannot yet gain the bonus spell.

I record Roywyn's daily spells and their save DCs in the spells section on the character sheet's third page. As a druid, Roywyn knows all the spells on the druid spell list, so I ignore the boxes for spells known. Roywyn's racial bonus to save DCs for illusion spells was recorded earlier in Step 4.

- Spontaneously cast *summon nature's ally* spells.

A note about this ability goes on the character sheet's fourth page. I also jot a note about this in the spells section.

- Chaotic, Evil, Good, and Lawful Spells: A druid can't cast spells of an alignment opposed to her own or her deity's (if she has one).

We haven't chosen Roywyn's deity or alignment yet, so it's best to just note this on scratch paper for now. In Step 8, we'll choose an alignment and record the limits on her spells.

- Bonus Languages.

A druid speaks Druidic as an extra language. As noted earlier, a druid also can choose Sylvan as a bonus language.

- Animal Companion

A 1st-level druid can have an animal as a guard, companion, and servant. Page 35 in the *Player's Handbook* has a list of animals from which the druid can choose her companion. Page 36 shows the special benefits the animal companion can have.

I'll choose a wolf for Roywyn's companion. According to page 36, Roywyn's wolf is pretty much like a regular wolf except that it knows a bonus trick (see the Handle Animal skill description on pages 74-75 in the *Player's Handbook*) and has the link and share spells special abilities.

I enter a wolf's statistics from the *Monster Manual* in the Animal Companion section of the character sheet's second page. I choose another gnomish name from the list on page 17 of the *Player's Handbook* for the wolf, calling it Glim. Because Roywyn has the Handle Animal skill, it's reasonable to assume that Glim has some training. As an animal with an Intelligence score of 2, Glim could learn up to six tricks (plus his bonus trick). After consulting the Handle Animal

skill description, I choose the following list of tricks: attack, defend, down, fetch, guard, heel, and seek. I enter these in the spaces provided.

- Nature Sense

A druid gains a +2 bonus on Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks. I went back to Step 5 and recorded these bonuses in the skills section (this also changed Roywyn's Survival score).

- Wild Empathy

This power allows a druid to influence the attitudes of animals and magical beasts, if they have Intelligence scores of 1 or 2. As a 1st-level druid with a Charisma score of 13, her wild empathy score is +2 (druid level + Charisma modifier). Against a magical beast, Roywyn's wild empathy is –2 (–4 for magical beasts). I record this information on the character sheet's 4th page.

Step 7: Choose a Feat

A character always starts with at least one feat.

Example: Roywyn has one feat as a 1st-level druid. She doesn't gain any bonus feats from her race or class. I choose Track and record that in the feats section on character sheet's fourth page.

Step 8: Choose an Alignment and Determine Other Details

Chapter 6 in the *Player's Handbook* explains alignments and will also help you determine things such as your character's height and weight.

Example: Because Roywyn is a druid, her alignment must have a neutral component. I choose neutral good. We can go back and complete Step 6 now, deleting spells of alignments opposed to Roywyn's. She cannot prepare or cast evil spells.

I grab a few dice and determine that Roywyn's starting age as 71 years. She is 3 feet, 3 inches tall, and she weighs 40 pounds.

Roywyn's alignment and personal statistics are recorded on the character sheet's first page.

Step 9: Select Equipment

Every character needs some gear.

Example: Once again, I'll save time by consulting the druid starting package on page 37 of the *Player's Handbook*. That package is intended for half-elf druids, but it will work for Roywyn with a few modifications for her small size. This gives Roywyn the following gear:

Hide armor	One day's rations
Heavy wooden shield	Bedroll
Scimitar	Sack
Club	Pouch with 10 sling bullets
Sling	Holly and mistletoe
Backpack	3 Torches
Waterskin	1d6 gold pieces

I record the gear in the possessions section on the character sheet's 2nd page. I'll also record Roywyn's armor and weaponry in the next step. Because Roywyn is size small, most of her equipment has only half the normal weight.

I roll 1d6 for Roywyn's cash and get a 3. I'll record Roywyn's 3 gold pieces in the money section on the 2nd page.

Tip: If you'd like to choose your equipment *ala carte* rather than choosing them from your class starting package, turn to page 111 in the *Player's Handbook*. You'll need 4-sided dice to generate your character's wealth (see Table 7-1) unless you decide to accept the average value for your class. You'll find a variety of equipment and prices in Chapter 7.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of *Dragon Magazine* for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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